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THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF NEW JAPAN.

BEFORE we enter upon the discussion of our subject, it is perhaps desirable that a wide-spread misconception regarding the nature of Japanese civilization be cleared away. It is generally believed that the Japanese are an old people, "nearly the eldest of the peoples," as the London *Spectator* once put it. The chronology of Japan, which was officially proclaimed for the first time in 1872, indeed makes her history stretch back to very great antiquity. It places the first year of the reign of Jimmu Tenno, the founder of the imperial house, 660 B.C., making him thus the contemporary, broadly speaking, of Draco and Solon, of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar. But this chronology, which was compiled from the oldest extant records of the country (the two historical books, certain parts of which, largely mythical and legendary,—*Kojiki* and *Nihongi*,—were compiled respectively in 712 and 720 A.D.), somewhat as Bishop Usher's Biblical chronology was compiled, seems to be altogether too long. The scholars who have studied the subject critically all seem to think that from five hundred to one thousand years must be struck off if we would reach the solid ground of history. Now, if the opinions of these scholars are to be trusted, then Japan is really one of the modern nations of the world, instead of being "nearly the eldest of the peoples." It will be found, if certain contemporary events in the East and the West are compared, that while the modern nations of the West were in the sixth century coming under the sway of Roman Christianity and Roman civilization, Japan in the Far East was at the same time coming under the sway of Chinese Buddhism and Chinese civilization. Japan, therefore, should not be classed with the old nations, such as China, India, Persia, or Egypt, but with the modern nations, such as Germany, France, or England.

But here a question will very naturally suggest itself. If

Japan started at the same time with the Western nations in her career of civilization, why was it that she was left so far behind? I think the question can be answered by remembering the fact that Japan had, as compared with the Western nations, to labor under some grave disadvantages. In the first place, she was the only modern nation in Asia. There was no other power near by (the geographical conditions not permitting the rise of such peoples anywhere in the Far East) with whom Japan might compete in noble rivalry in the arts of civilization, as was the case with the modern nations of Europe. In the second place, Japan started with only the intellectual legacy of China and India, while modern Europe started with by far the richer legacy of Rome, Greece, and Judea. Certain intellectual elements, such as the idea of personality or the spirit of scientific inquiry, which constitute such important factors in the civilization of modern Europe, were lacking in Japanese civilization. No wonder that, after more than one thousand years of trial, she fell far behind the nations of Europe. But, strictly speaking, Japan never had joined in the race. She was a solitary nation, hid away from all Western intercourse under the mist and cloud of the Far East. It is only within the last thirty or forty years that she has been brought into close touch with the life and spirit of modern times. No sooner, however, were her doors opened to Western influence, than she was at once thrown into the whirlpool of conflicting ideas. The recent history of Japan is the history of the conflict between the new Western ideas and the old dominant ideas of the East. The problems of civilization in modern Japan are the problems created out of this conflict. The task is to find some means for the adjustment of her old life and institutions with the conditions of her new environment.

With the possible exception of the French in the time of the Revolution, probably there never was a people who showed a more intense activity in mental life, who instituted more sweeping reforms or made more hazardous experiments at reorganization, with greater self-confidence, than the Japanese during the last quarter of a century. On not a few occasions

the judgment of foreign critics, who predicted the failure of these "rash" attempts, and who waited in serene complacency for the time when bankrupt Japan would be seen on her knees begging European protection, almost seemed to come true. Yet the nation finally came out of these dangers almost unscathed and made a creditable success in the work of reformation. So far as the establishment of the fundamental institutions of modern civilization is concerned, it may be said that the achievement has been a complete success. The modern army and navy, the public school system, the representative government, the bank and the judiciary are there in all their force and integrity. Moreover the scientific spirit and the idea of personality—the two imminent forces of modern society—are there, becoming more and more potent factors in the evolution of the new social order. Yet at the same time the old ideas are also regnant. Hence it is that we see those fiery conflicts of ideas in politics, in education, and in religion which make Japan's recent history so interesting.

Let us turn our attention first to the sphere of politics. We must remember that, notwithstanding the introduction of representative institutions, the old principle of loyalty and of implicit obedience to the will of the Mikado still prevails. To be sure, the Mikado has solemnly promised to observe the principles of the constitution and respect the rights of the people as guaranteed by the laws of the realm. It should be stated, moreover, as proof of his wisdom and patriotism, that all his promises hitherto made to the people have been most sedulously kept; so that there is no reason to fear that the nation at some unexpected day may be brought back, through perhaps a *coup d'état*, to the old state of autocracy. Besides, the country is already too deeply committed to modern thought, and popular influence is increasing too fast for any minister of the crown, however reactionary, to dare advise the suspension of the constitution. How these two principles of the divine right of the sovereign and the divine right of the people, which in Europe have so often waged fierce contests for ascendancy, are to be harmonized, is the problem which is

at present taxing the efforts of the most thoughtful politicians of the country. These politicians all see that it has been the intense loyalty of the people which, more than anything else, has carried the ship of state through the troubles of recent times, and that it is the imperial house which to-day gives unity to the nation, notwithstanding the presence of a hundred divisive forces. At the same time these statesmen also see that the rights and liberties of the people are not only to be preserved and guarded intact, so far as they exist already, but that they must be more and more increased in proportion as the people prove themselves capable of a larger exercise of their powers.

In a concrete form the problem is this, Shall we have a government in which the cabinet ministers are held responsible to a parliamentary majority? To this question one party answers no and the other party answers yes. There have existed for the last ten years two dividing opinions, one favoring the German model, and the other the English,—somewhat like the two parties which existed in the early days of the American Republic, one sympathizing with French and the other with English ideas. Both sides claim that they are working for the integrity of the throne and the rights of the people. There is this difference, however, between the two: those who favor the British system insist that it is the only one that will exempt the throne from responsibility for the sins and mistakes of the government, while those, on the other hand, who favor the German model point to the growing scepticism in Western countries as to the virtues of representative institutions, and yet more to the increasing menace from European aggression in Asia, which doubtless demands a strong and stable government.

As the industrial classes rise in influence, which indeed is rapidly taking place, the cry for a more popular form of government will become still louder; while, on the other hand, the whole military and naval section of the country, whose strength will be increasingly great, will be against any change which may seem to diminish the authority and glory of the crown and make the government less stable. There would

most likely be some violent clash of interests, and perhaps an appeal to arms, if the people were less patriotic and European aggression less threatening. But, thanks to the aggressive policies of some of the great powers of Europe and to their dearly bought lessons, Japan will be saved from the evils of civil strife, and the great contention somehow settled by peaceable means.*

In education similar conflicts are going on. When, nearly a quarter of a century ago, the modern system of education was first introduced, one of the reading-books began with a statement somewhat as follows: "God is the creator of the universe, and man is the lord of creation; wine and tobacco are injurious to health." This was a curious mixture of Christian dogma and temperance teaching. At first, these new and strange ideas did not call forth any opposition, the conservatives having been cowed by the bold domination of the reform sentiment. A whole set of translated text-books was for some ten years left undisturbed in unquestioned authority. But it was not long before the idea of nationality began to dawn upon the minds of the people, and the reactionists, seizing

* Very important events have been taking place within the year past, important chiefly because of their significance as to the final settlement of the parliamentary difficulty. In May, 1896, Count Itagaki, the leader of the Liberal party (*Jiyuto*), was appointed Minister of Home Affairs in the cabinet of Marquis Ito. This was a result of the *entente* entered upon in the previous fall between the Liberal party and Marquis Ito's government. This was a very bold step on the part of the marquis, since it meant the practical abandonment of his much-discussed and somewhat vaunted "transcendental policy." He seems to have seen, however, the impossibility of carrying on a constitutional administration without the help of political parties, and recognized in this large and well-organized Liberal party his best ally and supporters. In opposition to this alliance there was at once formed a combination of several parties, with the "Progressionist party" (*Kaishinto*, Count Okuma's party) as the nucleus. This new body, about equal in number to the Liberal party, is called the "Progressive party" (*Shimpoto*). Since the resignation of Marquis Ito and his cabinet, in the last days of August, Count Matsugata has organized a new ministry, with Count Okuma as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The new government is looking to the support of the former opposition party, The Progressive. Thus the inauguration of real party government does not seem to be very far off. Certainly recent events point most decidedly that way.

this opportunity, raised an outcry against what they called "republicanism," "Christianization," or the "too slavish imitation" of Western ways.

Public attention being called about this time to the subject of moral training in the schools, the educational authorities came to the conclusion that Confucianism was the most available means to that end. The gray-haired, old-fashioned Confucianists, who, either too stupid or too self-willed to adapt themselves to the conditions of the new *régime*, had been living in obscurity, were now unexpectedly brought forward to occupy the chairs of moral instruction. No contrast between the old and the new could have been more striking than this contrast between these Confucianists sitting in professors' chairs and the intelligent bright faces of the students trying to pay attention to the lectures, in halls constructed and furnished after a European model, filled with physical apparatus and American text-books. These ancient gentlemen, who were, indeed, excellent in conduct and learned in the old classic lore, did not, as a matter of course, make much impression as moral teachers. The spectacle was altogether too comical to be much longer seriously endured. Thus the attempt at the revival of Confucianism was a complete failure. But moral training must be given to the rising generation of the people somehow or other, and how to effect it was a problem nobody seemed able to solve, or even suggest a solution. The whole thing was in chaos. At this juncture, in 1890, there appeared the emperor's famous rescript on morals.* The document was drawn up with great care. It

* The rescript, promulgated on the emperor's birthday, November 3, 1890, runs as follows :

"The emperor regards his ancestors as having laid the foundations of this country high and broad, and as having established virtue deep and wide. My servants, with loyalty and filial piety, my people, by uniting as with one heart, have shown forth the worth of these virtues. Truly, herein consists my country's glory and the basis of education. You, my servants, be obedient to your parents, kind to your brothers; let husband and wife be mutually helpful; exercise self-control with humility; extend wide cordiality to the people; cultivate learning; engage in business; make wide the power of wisdom; perfect morality; and, more, extend blessings everywhere; exalt duty, always highly reverencing

was noble in style, concise in statement, and comprehensive in its exposition of moral duties. The rescript was at once hailed on all sides as a welcome shower on the sultry moral atmosphere of the time. It helped to impress upon the minds of all the importance of morality, and to free moral duties and life from the fetters of any one system, be it religious or philosophical. Although at the time a desperate attempt was made by certain reactionary educators to interpret this rescript according to their own narrow views, yet the candidness of tone and the catholicity of spirit so clearly noticeable in the document proved too strong for any such attempt to succeed. The emperor's rescript did, therefore, accomplish what it was most probably intended to accomplish. But, it must be confessed, something more was needed, in order to enforce the practice of morals, than a mere rescript, even though it be that of the adored Mikado.

The Japanese professors of morals cannot appeal to the authority of a religious system. After the failure of the attempt to revive Confucianism, no other similar project can succeed. Education has never been, at least during the last three centuries, in the hands of the Buddhist priests. Their ethical interests are to-day too weak to seek to influence the policy of moral education. Christianity is not to be thought of. It is yet new and untried, and its position, though highly respectable, is not commanding enough to take the lead in this work. The only available course left to the educators of Japan is to appeal to the sentiments of loyalty and patriotism which lie latent in the breast of every Japanese. Such appeals carry immense weight with the young and go no doubt a great

the power of the state and following the laws of the country. Should, perchance, any great calamity threaten, openly and courageously give aid to the unending destiny of the empire. So doing, you are not merely loyal servants to the emperor, but you thereby manifest the spirit of your ancestors. Truly, this moral path is the will of my ancestors. And you, descendants, should guard this with them. These unerring principles run through all past and present time, and belong alike to all peoples. That the emperor and you, his servants, together should with one heart hold these moral principles in highest regard is the royal desire."

This is not by any means an adequate translation of the noble original.

way in solving the problem. But this method, now almost exclusively used, needs to be carefully guarded against running into narrow fanaticism or extreme one-sidedness. It is to be remembered that the one-sided emphasis on obedience to superiors was a note of the old system of ethics. The talk about loyalty and patriotism is just now particularly popular, and the temptation to run into excess in this direction is not easy for ordinary teachers to resist. The present dissatisfaction with this reactionary tendency is deep and wide-spread. Those who oppose this tendency insist that while the sentiment of loyalty and patriotism is not to be less tenderly nourished, yet educators should not forget, as they so often do, to teach the young that in order to perform public service they must be in the first place men of good personal character. To go a step further, not only must they teach that truthfulness, temperance, generosity, thrift, are virtues which are indispensable to those who would be loyal and patriotic subjects of the Mikado, but that they are so important in themselves they ought to be freed from the domination of any other class of virtues and given independent positions.

Most likely this one-sided emphasis on the importance of the public virtues to the neglect of the private is a momentary phase in the educational development and will gradually pass away. With the increase of intelligence among the people and the growth of the privately-endowed schools, almost all conducted on more liberal lines than the government institutions, it will become more and more difficult for any one party to monopolize the education of the young. But this practical method of inculcating morals is only applicable in the education of the young up to a certain stage in their career. The moment they begin to think independently and to question the ground of moral sanctions, this practical dogmatical method will cease to be useful. Nay, it may become positively injurious, and subversive of the very end aimed at. Reason, and reason alone, can be the final court of appeal. Educators will be compelled to rely on a philosophy of ethics. But what philosophy shall it be? Here is another sphere for the conflict of the old and the new ideas. Shall it be the philosophy that

starts from the mechanical conception of the world, basing its ethics on the theory of necessity and utilitarianism? The old Eastern philosophy of pantheistic idealism, with its doctrine of the *Kharma*, of the absolutely unavoidable chain of cause and effect in the world of phenomena, will be a great support for this view. Shall it be the philosophy that starts from the idea of human personality, basing its ethics on the theory of personal freedom? Shall it be individualistic in the sense of recognizing the essential worth of each human being as a member of the whole? Or shall it be socialistic in the sense of recognizing the paramount importance and claims of the whole, say of the nation, practically ignoring the worth and claims of individuals? Which is the aim of human existence, the welfare of each individual or that of the whole in its collective capacity? Or is each view wrong, as thus stated and emphasized, and is the only true course to hold them both in the proper synthesis of a larger and more comprehensive conception? In fine, this question may be otherwise stated by asking how much importance is the idea of human personality (which is yet new) to assume in the coming ethical philosophy of Japan? The higher education and the scientific thinking of the country have not yet reached the stage of discussing these questions with deep interest and with great deliberation and thoroughness. But it seems to me that the time is fast coming when the discussion of these high themes will engage the keenest attention of the leading educators of the land.

Lastly, let us turn our attention to another department of life, where the conflict between the old and the new is not less fierce. Buddhism and Christianity have come into deadly conflict in Japan. These two religious systems represent two distinct world-views. In Buddhism we see the emphasis laid on the idea of the whole, entirely distinct from the idea of the parts. In Christianity, on the other hand, the emphasis is laid on the idea of human personality as the expression of the whole. The one regards ethical attributes to be entirely inapplicable to the nature of the ultimate reality, which lies back of this impermanent, finite existence. The other looks upon ethical attributes as constituting

the very core and essence of the world-substance, and the full possession of those attributes by individuals as the only warrant for their immortal existence. The conflict is not between one native system and another foreign system, but between two distinct world-views, which are fighting for mastery, so to speak, within the mind of the nation. For the Christian churches of Japan are now no longer a sort of foreign settlement in the midst of an unsympathetic community. They have become naturalized, and the ideas they represent have powerful supporters in the new literature of the country. Thus the conflict rages between Buddhistic pantheism on the one hand and Christian theism on the other,—the one strong in its hold upon the masses, supported by the natural trend of native thought, itself the result of that teaching, and encouraged by the unexpected aid it is receiving from a certain class of scientific thinking in the West; the other is strong in its hold upon the ethical sense of the people, so ably trained by Confucianism, and is encouraged by the enthusiasm manifested by souls newly emancipated from the fetters of pessimistic fatalism. On which side shall the victory be? A very noteworthy feature in the whole movement is that each side is casting away its old armor of scholastic dogmatism, and coming forward to meet the other, clad in the simple native attire of its own.* To change the figure, in each the dogmatic superstructure is being battered down by some of its own followers. For higher criticism has come into Japan, and is active both in the Christian and the Buddhistic communities. As a result, the essential truths of one religion will be matched with the essential truths of the other. What is yet more remarkable is the fact that religious hatred and fanaticism are gradually dying out, and friendly discussions and candid comparisons of views are taking the place of mutual suspicion and angry disputations. The one good

* A very interesting movement has been going on for several years among the younger Buddhists towards attempting a critical exposition of Buddhism. There is indeed a great need for higher criticism in Buddhism, and these younger men are courageously initiating the movement. Their official organ is the review called *The Budkio*.

effect of such impartial criticism will be the clearer appreciation of the similarity, as well as the dissimilarity, between the two opposing systems. Can it be possible that as the final outcome of these tendencies some great mind will arise who will present in a larger and deeper world-view than either a complete synthesis of the essential truths of both, and thus be a means of reconciliation between the theistic West and the pantheistic East? Is such an outcome altogether a fool's dream, never to be realized? Or are the two views, on the contrary, utterly irreconcilable, and shall they finally divide the field, to remain separate and distinct forever? Shall it be again, as some persons confidently predict, that the pantheistic stomach of the giant East will easily assimilate the theistic view and transform it into a shapeless mass? Or, yet again, is ethical theism to keep its ground and remain a living force, growing in influence with the growth of the new social order, till the whole East is transformed into a land of freedom, enlightenment, and civilization?

My aim in making this brief and very inadequate sketch of the ethical and political problems of Japan has been to uncover the real heart of the Far East, and to show how *there* the same pulses of humanity are beating as in the Far West. I trust I have succeeded to some degree in my attempt. I trust I have succeeded in exorcising the demon out of the imaginary Far East, and in presenting her comely clad and in right mind, like to the nations of the West.

I claim that these problems of new Japan are not hers alone, but that they are also the problems of the West. Their right and successful solution concerns the best welfare of the West as much as of the Far East. For, can it be possible that those seven hundred millions of human beings who inhabit the other half of the globe are destined to remain forever the instrument and slaves of Western greed? What do all the social unrest and agitation in Western lands mean but this, that the great problems of humanity are not to be solved by the West alone, but that the East is to be called upon for its contribution and co-operation? Let us hope, then, that the twentieth century will open better prospects for the peoples of

the East, and that before the close of that century there may arise several civilized powers in place of the present decrepid countries. Certainly Japan needs and claims the sympathy and support of the civilized powers of the West, in the new and untried course she has entered upon.

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TOKYO, JAPAN.

MORALITY AND THE BELIEF IN THE SUPER-NATURAL.

THE influence of religion upon ethical progress and ethical standards has been so often discussed, as well from the standpoint of those who defend the claims of religion to be the source and the mainstay of morality as from that point of view whence the moral life is regarded as having developed quite independently of theological creeds, that the subject may perhaps seem to stand in no need of further elucidation or development. Yet the whole question is apt to grow somewhat hazy and indefinite to the student of the history of morals, because its inherent difficulties are greatly increased by the vagueness and ambiguity in the use of the word religion,—a Protean word of which the meaning changes almost as often as we turn from one author to another, sometimes even as we pass from one sentence to another. Believing that the essential points in the main controversy can be made clearer if this source of misunderstanding is removed, I have chosen in what follows to speak of the belief in supernaturalism rather than the religious belief. And this will at the same time mark clearly the limits of the present investigation. For there are, as is well known, not a few persons at the present day who discard supernaturalism and the miraculous as affording an interpretation of fact, and perhaps relegate such conceptions to the limbo of mere "Aberglaube," who yet regard their admiration and reverence for nature and its laws as a genuine and sufficient religion. But I do not propose to discuss here the possible effect upon morality of such a strictly "natural religion" as this, but rather to indicate what